

## **ABSTRACT**

**DISSERTATION:** Empathy, Reading, and Gender Relationships

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For this study, empathy was defined as not only understanding and sharing another's mental state, but also responding from a perspective more closely resembling the observed rather than the observer. Based on evidence suggesting relationships between reading and empathy, between empathy and gender, and between reading and gender, the current study investigated the relationship between empathy and reading and how this relationship varies as a function of psychological gender. Canonical correlation analysis confirmed the relationship of reading behaviors and appreciation of reading to aspects of empathy. It also demonstrated the utility of investigating gender differences based not on physical, but psychological gender, and confirmed a positive relationship between femininity and empathy. Key among the findings was the discovery of a positive relationship of psychological masculinity to cognitive empathy, amount of non-fiction reading, and appreciation of reading. The greater predictive power in psychological gender, which is more malleable than physical gender, counters sex stereotypes regarding empathy and reading behaviors; if men can be more like women in personality, they may also be more empathetic. The relationships established in this study have implications for the development of empathy and programs to facilitate it.